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28 May 1956

Procedures to be Followed in the Event of an Aircraft Loss  
Over Hostile Territory

I. Action - Prior to Evidence of Hostile Reaction 25X1A2g

A. Immediate notification of Headquarters by the [REDACTED] Commander through both Agency and USAF channels. In turn, Project Headquarters will notify State Department and NACA contacts and, along with USAF Headquarters, arrange for final review and agreement on action items indicated under II, below.

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B. Overflight operations will cease immediately. However, [REDACTED] will continue to operate as normal with all flights assigned cover data-gathering missions.

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C. Normal USAF press release prepared by [REDACTED] Commander (and coordinated with General Wilson, 3rd Air Force and/or General Tunner, CINCSAFE, as appropriate), will be issued indicating that a U-2 aircraft is overdue and presumed lost, adding that the last reported position of the aircraft was - - (see below and paragraph II.E(1)). The release will go on to indicate that Air Rescue Service has instituted a search for the aircraft. The announced area of the search will depend upon the known or estimated point of compromise (e.g. loss over Murmansk area or the Arctic fringe of European USSR would suggest northern Norway as the area for Air Rescue operations; loss over the Ukraine would suggest the Black Sea littoral of Turkey as the most logical area for search.)

The release should be timed to accord with normal USAF practice (no more than a few hours after a known or assumed loss). Should press queries immediately follow the initial "presumed lost" press release but precede evidence of hostile reaction, a press release based on the unclassified cover story will be issued by the [REDACTED] Commander (through 3rd Air Force or USAF as appropriate) describing the alleged mission of the aircraft and sponsorship of the program.

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D. Immediate and special counter-espionage precautions will be taken at the base of operations with steps of action coordinated between the [REDACTED]

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II. Action - After Hostile Press and/or Radio Reaction

A. General PIO Policy: All releases in response to hostile reaction will originate and emanate from Headquarters after full coordination has been made. Releases decided upon will be communicated immediately (1) through USAF channels to appropriate USAF elements in the field

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i.e. USAF, 3rd Air Force, 7th Air Division); (2) through Agency channels to the [redacted] Commander [redacted] (3) through State channels to U.S. Ambassadors in [redacted] and Moscow. Thus, upon evidence of hostile reaction, no releases will be made by field elements of the USAF or by host country authorities except those made subsequent to and in accord with releases communicated from Headquarters.

B. General Guide on Press Releases: The nature of the hostile reaction cannot be predicted in advance, thus the precise detail of post-loss releases must remain flexible. It is assumed that hostile reaction can take the form of a fairly complete and accurate expose of project activities; whether Soviet and/or satellite reaction will take such form is open to speculation. Since we must be prepared for any eventuality, the samples of releases which follow should be treated as general guide lines. The need for flexibility up to the point of actual release is the major reason for centralizing release authority in Headquarters to assure that the U.S. Government speaks with one voice. All releases dealing with the nature and sponsorship of project activity will of course be in accord with releases already issued and the unclassified cover story; however, this paper concerns itself only with the additional explanations that must be given to cover a loss over hostile territory.

C. Loss Close to Hostile Periphery: Should the aircraft be lost close to but inside the hostile periphery (within 200 miles), and this be admitted or at least not denied in the hostile reaction, we shall maintain one of the two following positions, depending upon the circumstances and relative plausibility:

(1) the pilot was intercepted along the hostile periphery (but over Western territory or international waters) and forced to follow the hostile interceptors inside Soviet and/or Satellite frontiers; or

(2) that the pilot was obviously confused in his navigation and became lost, inadvertently overflying Soviet and/or Satellite territory. (See Attachments A-1 and A-2 for sample releases).

D. Loss Deep Within Hostile Territory: Should the loss occur deep within hostile territory, and the depth of penetration be revealed in the hostile reaction, we shall maintain that Soviet and/or Satellite allegations are incorrect or inaccurate, going on to state (using one or the other of the two variants in C, above) that the incident was close to the hostile periphery. Our counter-charge would claim that the hostile power is obviously distorting the facts for propaganda purposes just as has been done in several instances in the past when the Soviets or Satellites claimed willful violation of their airspace. We shall bolster our counter-propaganda position by maintaining that the incident could not have occurred

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deep within hostile borders since the known performance of the aircraft would not have enabled it to penetrate that deeply, given the known flight path of the aircraft up to the time of its last reported position. (See Attachment B for a sample release.)

E. Backstopping of Release: The type of releases suggested in C and D, above, require further backstopping as follows:

1. The releases in IIC and D would be strengthened if we could assert positive knowledge concerning the location of the aircraft a short time before the "incident". Thus, the release indicating the aircraft is overdue and presumed lost (I.C, above) should contain a statement on the "last reported position", adding that communications contact with the aircraft was subsequently lost. The "last reported position" should coincide with the area in which search operations are conducted.

2. To lend credence to either of the counter-propaganda positions recommended above, we shall have photographs of the meteorological configuration allegedly carried by the lost aircraft; moreover, we shall point to upper atmosphere data (studies produced by NASA and USIAF) which confirm the fact that the alleged data collection program was in fact conducted as evidenced by the data collected and studies compiled. (Note: should the compromise occur early in the operational program, we may not have studies actually prepared since such studies would be based on data collected over a period of several weeks; however, this could be openly admitted since it is quite plausible, and selected portions of raw "taps" could be used in lieu of prepared studies.)

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ATTACHMENT A-1

(Note: A proposed release for use in the event that an aircraft is lost close to the hostile periphery. Attachment A-2 is an alternate release.)

The U.S. Government denies the Russian accusation that an American aircraft, which the Soviets charge (crashed, was shot down, was forced down) within Russian territory, was engaged in a photo reconnaissance mission over Russian territory.

Moscow Radio announced last night that an American aircraft (crashed, was shot down, was forced down) twenty miles south of Murmansk. The announcement charged that Soviet authorities investigating the incident had ascertained that the aircraft was engaged in a reconnaissance flight over Russian territory (and added that the American pilot, identified as ....., confirmed that his mission was one of photographing Soviet military installations and collecting other intelligence data).

A Russian diplomatic protest has been lodged with the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow. A formal U.S. reply to the Soviet note will follow a thorough investigation by U.S. authorities of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

The aircraft in question may possibly be one and the same as the Lockheed U-2 reported missing by NACA and USAF officials three days ago. This aircraft, engaged in a NACA-sponsored research program, was the object of intense air-sea rescue search during the last three days following a 3rd Air Force announcement that the aircraft was overdue and presumed lost 75 miles west of the North Cape of Norway. All efforts to locate either plane or pilot have failed.

The NACA research program, announced to the U.S. press in early May, has as its purpose the collection of data on upper air phenomena (i.e., turbulence measurements, temperature and wind structures at jet levels, cosmic ray effects, etc.) at altitudes up to 50,000 feet. The NACA program is conducted both in the U.S. and abroad. Research aircraft abroad are based at USAF installations where NACA is supported by the USAF Air Weather Service.

NACA and USAF authorities speculate that the missing U-2 aircraft, whose last reported position was 75 miles west of the North Cape of Norway, may have been intercepted over international waters and (was forced to land within the USSR, was shot down over international waters - a fact the Soviets are attempting to hide with their sensational accusations, crashed in an attempt to evade Soviet attack). One or a combination of the above explanations may account for the lost U-2.

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ATTACHMENT A-2

(Same as Attachment A-1 with exception of the last paragraph, which is as follows:)

NACA and USAF authorities state that the missing B-2 last reported its position as 75 miles west of the North Cape of Norway. Contact with the pilot was then lost. These officials speculate that the pilot (flying in bad weather, hampered by loss of radio contact and loss of radio navigation system) may have wandered inadvertently over Soviet territory where he later (was forced down, was shot down by Soviet interceptors, crashed in an attempt to evade Soviet attack).

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ATTACHMENT B

Moscow Radio announced last night that an American aircraft (crashed, was shot down, was forced down) in the vicinity of Moscow. The announcement charged that Soviet authorities investigating the incident had ascertained that the aircraft was engaged in a reconnaissance mission. This was determined, the Soviet statement added, not only by an examination of the aircraft (wreckage), (but also as a result of the "free admission" of the American pilot. The pilot, identified by the Russians as ..... , allegedly confirmed that his mission was one of photographing Soviet military installations and collecting other intelligence data).

A Russian diplomatic protest has been lodged with the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow. The U.S. reply to the Soviet note, expected to follow almost immediately, will probably take the form of the strong unofficial denial of Russia's charges made earlier today by NACA and USAF officials.

NACA and USAF spokesmen indicated that the Soviet allegations were palpably false and were a purposeful misrepresentation of the facts. They stated that the American aircraft in question was a Lockheed U-2, reported missing by NACA and USAF officials three days ago. Engaged in a NACA-sponsored research program, the aircraft was the object of intense but unsuccessful air-sea rescue search off the Black Sea coast of Turkey. The NACA research program, announced to the U.S. press in early May, has as its purpose the collection of data on upper air phenomena (turbulence measurements, temperature and wind structure at jet levels, cosmic ray effects, etc.) at altitudes up to 55,000 feet. The NACA program is conducted both in the U.S. and abroad. Research aircraft abroad are based at USAF installations where NACA is supported by the USAF Air Weather Service.

NACA and USAF authorities speculate that the missing U-2 aircraft, whose last reported position was 20 miles north of Sinop, Turkey, may either have been intercepted by Soviet fighters over the Black Sea or may have inadvertently wandered over the Soviet Black Sea coast, at which point it (was forced down, was shot down or crashed in an attempt to evade Soviet attack). In no case, these officials added, could the incident have occurred deep within Russian territory as maintained in the Soviet charge, since the known performance of the single-engine jet aircraft would never have enabled it to reach the Moscow area, given the flight path already traversed by the aircraft up to the time of its last reported position.

The intent behind the serious Soviet charge probably reflects Russian embarrassment over an incident which actually occurred over international waters—a fact which the Soviets are attempting to hide by making their sensational charges. Alternatively, the pilot may have through (an error in navigation, bad weather, an emergency resulting from engine failure) have wandered over the Soviet Black Sea coast—but Soviet charges are designed to make more sensational propaganda just as has been done in several instances in the past when the Soviets or Satellites claimed willful violation of their air space.

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